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DRAMA

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JUNE MCMXXV

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SIXPENCE
MONTHLY

L O N D O N
THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE
8 ADELPHI TERRACE
W.C.

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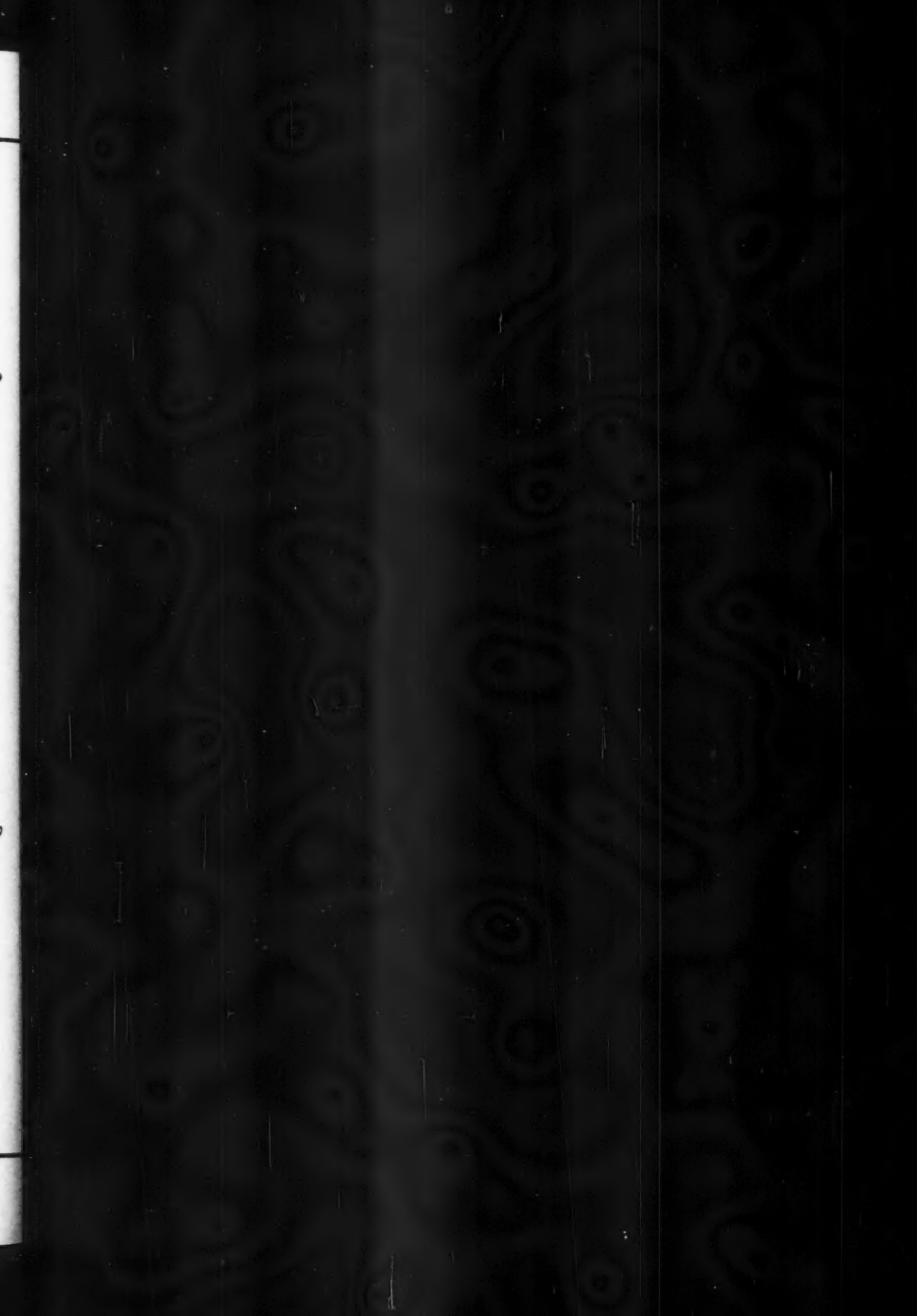
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DRAMA

JUNE MCMXXV

THE JOURNAL OF THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE

THE BEST PLAYS OF THE MONTH

According to E. A. Baughan

"RAIN," should have been the best play of the month if *réclame* means anything. But I must confess to bitter disappointment. The adaptors have made an effective melodrama of Somerset Maugham's impressive short story. But a full development of its dramatic motives are to seek in the play. The harlot, Sadie Thompson, is made the chief figure, and the part is brilliantly played at Garrick Theatre by Olga Lindo with a convincing American accent. It is not a difficult part as far as its character-acting goes, but this young actress does realize the emotional and, as far as the authors have allowed her, the spiritual side of the character. All that the missionary goes through takes place off the stage. We do not see how gradually his emotional fanaticism merges into sexual emotions, nor do we feel that this is the inevitable result of his unnatural marriage. Malcolm Keen started, I think, on too emotional a key. The man should be portrayed at first as a cold and unflinching fanatic.

The persistent rain at the Garrick Theatre had the irritating effect on my nerves that it is supposed to have on the nerves of the *dramatis personæ*. The play is effective melodrama, but no more. Its big subject is quite marred by its superficial treatment. The acting all round is good, especially that of the missionary's adoring wife.

The "Ordeal" at the Strand has not received the same publicity, but it is quite as good as "Rain." It was marred a little, I thought, by the emphatic melodramatic acting of Lyn Harding, as the

mad steward who dominates the party on the derelict yacht, but I am singular in that opinion. The part of an old and deaf lady, whose calm cry of "steward" breaks the spirit of the madman at the end of the play, was beautifully played by Haidée Wright, and one could have appreciated her playing more fully if every word had been audible.

"Beggar on Horseback" at the Queen's Theatre is a delightful entertainment for those who have a trifle of fantasy in their composition. The authors, Americans both, have made a skilful use of "expressional" acting in their representation of the young composer's dream. They have proved, perhaps without meaning to do so, that this dramatic fad has its proper uses in the portrayal of a dream or fantasy. The play is only on the surface—it does not pretend to be more than an entertainment—but it is a successful achievement in its way.

Monckton Hoffe's "Crooked Friday" is a strange amalgam of amusing satire of Americans' love of high-sounding rhetoric and false sentiment, and of British sentimentality. Dennis Neilson-Terry, who produced the play, has asked us to take the character he impersonates in all seriousness. I found it impossible, but I enjoyed the author's occasional and characteristic freakishness. From every point of view it is a poor play of sentiment; as a satire, if consistent, it might have been interesting. "Crooked Friday" has the merit of not being dull.

"Sun-Up" at the Vaudeville is not a good play, because a deluge of unreal sentiment at the end spoils its natural

THE BEST PLAYS OF THE MONTH

pathos. The acting of Lucille La Verne, who was here some twenty years ago, is the most moving piece of work I have seen on the stage for many years.

The production of Tchekov's "The Cherry Orchard" at the Hammersmith Lyric Theatre was of special interest, because no play of Tchekov's has been publicly performed in London since "The Sea

Gull" was produced years ago at the Little Theatre. Mr. J. B. Fagan's Oxford Company, with the addition of O. B. Clarence as the old retainer of the family, does its work in a competent way, but Tchekov should be played with less emphasis and stress and with more rapidity. But what a wonderful play it is! It will be very interesting to discover how far a Tchekov play is a commercial proposition.

"MADHOUSE DRAMA"

A Reply by Christopher St. John

THE task of defending the plays charged in an article by G. Gordon Young last month with being "madhouse drama" would be easier if the prosecution had given us a more precise definition of the offence. We know that all systems of aesthetics amount ultimately to no more than the doctrine that what the writer likes is "good" and that what he doesn't like is "bad," and from some criticism we can learn more—that what the writer understands is sane, and what he doesn't understand is crazy. Consequently unless we are satisfied that a particular writer has taken great trouble to find the clues to the meaning of the work he is judging, we attach very little importance to his opinion that it is "mad." The custom of using the word in a loose non-pathological sense is very ancient apparently, as Socrates found it necessary to warn his disciples that those whom the world calls mad "have a divine release from the common ways of men." Some of the greatest thinkers of the past were reckoned madmen by their contemporaries, and although we flatter ourselves that they would be better understood to-day, there is still a tendency to think that a person of great originality and independence, unworldly in thought and in action, must have a screw loose. Undoubtedly some people take advantage of this tendency, and assume in life and in art an eccentricity, though they "have it not," in the hope that they will attract attention, but in drama, perhaps owing to the implicit directness and simplicity of the medium, bogus

queerness is easily detected. Mr. Gordon Young does not object to Pirandello's queerness, because, I take it, he thinks it is genuine. He does object to Susan Glaspell's because, I take it, he thinks it is not. So the case is, after all, not one against the "madhouse drama," but against spurious examples of it.

I must leave Stark Young's "The Colonnade" out of the discussion, as I have not read it and did not see the Stage Society's production, and confine myself to "The Verge." What line does the prosecution take about it?

1. The play is far-fetched. Has Susan Glaspell gone so far to fetch her theme? It is familiar to everyone with an elementary knowledge of the mystical quest. In the East and in the West in the ancient, mediæval, and modern worlds we find the type of human being to which Susan Glaspell's "Claire" belongs. The American word "otherness" is not a source either of confusion or irritation to those who know how difficult the mystics find it to describe their goal. In pursuing it they make sacrifices which appear to the mass of worldly people, of which mankind consists, monstrous, even wicked. Claire's murder of the man who is pulling her back into the world of sense is perfectly comprehensible if we possess the clue of St. Jerome's advice to a youth who desired to enter a monastery. "If your father and mother stand in the doorway delaying you, walk over them." Perhaps I should add that I am not excusing Claire's conduct, only explaining it.

"MADHOUSE DRAMA"

2. The play is obscure. Does that matter? It is quite possible to enjoy "Hamlet" without being able to say exactly what the play means. It is so obscure, that learned men have wrangled for centuries as to whether Hamlet's madness is real or feigned. Mr. Shaw tells us in the preface to "Androcles and the Lion" of a writer of "distinguished intellectual competence," who, making a study of the Gospels for the first time since his childhood, found it "all such nonsense that he couldn't stick it."

3. The play is deliberately "queer." This means, if it means anything, that its author wrote it with the conscious intention of making an effect by doing something unusual. She devised situations and wrote dialogue with no consideration as to whether they really meant anything—in short, put up a pretentious intellectual bluff. This is pure assumption. How Sybil

Thorndike could have given a performance, distinguished by such a clear mental grasp of the character of Claire, if Susan Glaspell had not clearly understood her subject beats me. One reason for welcoming this "madhouse" play is that it has given Sybil Thorndike one of the finest women's parts ever conceived by any dramatist. Actors have hitherto enjoyed a monopoly of these studies of the "unconquerable mind."

Mr. Young wonders what Shakespeare would say if he could see "The Verge," and other examples of the lunatic asylum drama, Shakespeare who, in Mr. Young's opinion, is so beautifully sane! Shakespeare would, at any rate, not say what Mr. Young says. He would be a better witness for the defence than for the prosecution, as lunacy of all kinds appears to have interested him deeply. I call William Shakespeare. "Will you kindly step into the witness-box?"

A NOTE ON THE "ART THEATRE"

By Jacques Copeau

AS for these so-called "Art Theatres." . . . Every day a new one comes into existence. So little is required to gain the air of being in the van of progress; not much more than the replacement of scenery by a few brown curtains, the abandonment of footlights, or simply the upsetting of all the hitherto accepted theories of our art. Granted that a certain sort of originality is shown by using a coffee pot as a top hat, or by making an armchair whose natural purpose is thwarted by the fact that it is impossible to sit down in it. In the same way any mushroom theatre can pose as being an art theatre if it possess nothing more than a stage decorator and a designer of dresses. And here one touches on one of the illusions most frequently met with in our calling. Some young and enthusiastic artists band themselves together to found a theatre. As often as not they have no good plays to act, and no good actors. But they will certainly have at their disposal a fairly adequate scene painter, and a passable designer of costumes. So it will

be in this direction that their efforts will be pushed, their originality displayed. But where in all this is the art of the theatre? And is it not the fact that what for the last fifteen or twenty years has gone under the name of the new movement in the theatre has been, 75 per cent. of it, nothing else than a new movement of costume designers and decorators? But beneath this blinding phantasmagoria of stage effects the drama remains stagnant. For where does the influence of the Baksts and the Reinhardts find its conclusion? In the music hall, and to some slight extent in the official theatres which timidly enbolder themselves to wrap up their lifeless actors in any gaudy wrappings that come to hand. That is why I would assert at the start that while, of course, it must find its place in the general *ensemble*, the stage decorator's point of view should be strictly supervised and closely watched. It should be kept within bounds, at first even utterly banished; because, being the easiest of all, it is insidious and deceptive.

THE BERLIN STAGE

What it was—is—and could be

OR what it *ought* to be, I should rather say—Which, in fact, would amount to very much the same as it was.

To put the thing in a nutshell, the Berlin stage had reached its very summit of perfection in the years immediately preceeding the war, and probably also—I could not watch it personally at this time—during the first year of the upheaval. Certainly, in the course of that third half decade of the century, and some years earlier, Berlin had wrested from Vienna the privilege of being the pre-eminent outpost of German dramatic art.

It was the time, when Otto Brahm (god-father of Ibsen and Hauptmann on the German stage) was cultivating the finest style of "realistic" drama. It was the time, when Max Reinhardt was at his very best, revolutionizing stage production and introducing unheard of elements of colour, romance and technical novelties. It was the time when that great producer was simply bursting with enterprise and activity, when, in the course of one season, he produced or revived sixteen different plays of Shakespeare, playing to crowded houses for eight consecutive months. It was the time, when the greatest actors of the German stage, Albert Bassermann, Paul Wegener, Alexander Moissi, Werner Krauss, Lucie Hörllich, Rosa Bertens and many others, were all working under the same roof, forming what was probably one of the finest ensembles ever assembled on any one stage.

Moreover it was the time, when you had to attend at the box-office on a Sunday morning at eight, because, a few hours later, you would'nt have got a seat for any day of the week, for love or money.

Let us tackle this (not quite unimportant) side of the matter first, when we come to turn from "what it was" to "what it is." To-day's box-office situation could best be illustrated by the story of the strange man who apparently meant to buy a good seat at the regular box-office price (without any allowances or special reductions), and who could'nt get it, as the young lady behind

the counter, evidently considering the man to be a lunatic, fainted and fell off her stool.

Which means to say that business is rotten. If you ask business men for an explanation, they will tell you it is because the artistic standard has come down to a remarkable degree; and if you ask artists to explain *that*, they will tell you, it is because business has been declining to such an alarming extent.

They are both right and wrong. The real root of the evil is, of course, the general economic decline. The public cannot spend as much as it used to, the theatres are not financed as soundly as they were, and the business of running a theatre has become more or less a gamble. Everything has got to be staked on one card, in order to make it a trump and to avoid failure. And that is why less stress is laid on the achievement of a decent all-round production than on the acquisition of one famous star, stupendous sets, and other "box-office propositions." All of which necessarily means cultivation of the "star system" and death of ensemble play; and moreover, more or less, the death of the "independent" producer, and the formation of big trusts comprising several theatres. As a matter of fact (apart of the "Staatliche Schauspielhaus" which, being subsidized by the State, could always afford to manage on ensemble and repertory lines), almost all the Berlin theatres which really count are controlled by three or four men.

I must admit to having painted the present situation rather more black than it really is. But as an excuse I may claim the fact that, like all ardent lovers of the stage, I am bitterly grieved at the decline of the last decade, although the fault lies much less with the stage than with the general economic situation which, for the time being, renders a return to the pre-war state more or less impossible.

As a matter of fact, even as it is now, there are some quite noteworthy points in it, and some of these shall be dealt with in a following article.

HEINRICH FRAENKEL.



SCENE FROM "MIDSUMMER EVE"
BY GORDON BOTTOMLEY. ARTS
LEAGUE OF SERVICE TRAVELLING
THEATRE PRODUCTION.

THE THEATRE OF THE PAST

A Causerie Conducted by Allardyce Nicoll

THE worm of doubt cankers much of our modern literary research. We discover a new document which seems to make an age-old mystery clear. We hail the find with joy, and in a short time we set about to find other documents to substantiate, and often to refute, that which has been brought to light. Perhaps the interval between the first flush of crediting enthusiasm, and the questioning disbelief has been nowhere more attenuated than with the recent discoveries of Dr. J. Leslie Hotson on the subject of Marlowe's death. The documents this scholar has unearthed from the Record Office seemed to give the final word on the murder of the Elizabethan poet. With Nicholas Skeres, Robert Poley and Ingram Frysar Marlowe is seen to go to an inn at Deptford on May 31, 1593. They all dine and drink (no doubt heavily), and an altercation breaks forth concerning the payment of the "reckoning." Marlowe draws Frysar's dagger, and the latter, to defend himself, turns to wrench the weapon out of the poet's hand. In the struggle it enters Marlowe's eye, "*de qua quidem plaga mortali prædictus Christoferus Morley adtunc & ibidem instanter obiit.*" Such was the story told to the coroner's jury on June 1, 1593, and, on its acceptance, Frysar received a queen's pardon.

Yet, within a week or two of this discovery disbelief has entered in, disbelief, not of the documents so brilliantly discovered by Dr. Hotson, but of the findings of the jury. Other sources of information reveal the facts that Ingram Frysar, Robert Poley and Nicholas Skeres were rather a shady crew. Their financial transactions are dubious in the extreme, and one of them at least played a Judas-like game with Mary Queen of Scots. Marlowe, too, is now seen to have been in the secret service of the Government, and there is at least some justification for those who, like Miss Eugénie de Kalb, believe that the true "story at the back of that long day's talk in Deptford—the more remote, the real causes of Marlowe's death—has still to be cleared up."

Dr. Hotson's discovery, so provocative of thought, has come at a most opportune moment. I have noticed his book on this page, partly because of its own intrinsic importance, partly in order to draw the attention of readers of *DRAMA* to the appeal now being made for funds to complete the Marlowe Memorial at Canterbury. The statue at present in existence is unfinished because lack of money prevented the original committee from filling all the four niches left for the tragic heroes of Marlowe's pen. Now a new appeal is being launched. A committee has been formed, and Sir Sidney Lee has undertaken to act as treasurer. It is certainly to be trusted that the appeal will be successful. Already a certain amount of money has been gathered, but assuredly not sufficient for the object in view. Proposals have been made for the performance of Elizabethan plays in benefit of the fund, and possibly many University dramatic societies and other similar groups may see their way during the winter to follow this lead. Such performances would at one and the same time help on the work of the fund and aid in keeping alive the spirit of that drama which Marlowe did so much to create.

Marlowe will ever remain one of the most interesting of our early poets, a man of "elemental fire," a bold spirit, chief of those pioneers who paved the way for Shakespeare. A complete memorial to him would stand as a visible symbol of our admiration for him, and although his works form his most lasting surety of enduring fame, this homage is owing by us who through his poetry and through the poetry of his successors have been given so much. Such a memorial would serve as a permanent record of that fatal night of May 31, 1593, the story of which, or the outer story of which, has been presented to us by Dr. Hotson.

[Donations to the Marlowe Memorial Fund should be sent to the Midland Bank Ltd., 69 Pall Mall, London, W.C.1, or to the Honorary Secretary, Miss Joyce Brown, 33 Bloomsbury Square, London, W.C.1.]

BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE NOTES



THE JOURNAL OF THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE

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Neither the Editor nor the Drama League as a whole accepts any responsibility for the opinions expressed in signed articles printed in this Journal.

THE Annual General Meeting of the League will be held on Friday, July 3, and not on the last Friday in June as previously announced. We hope that as many members as possible will make a point of attending.

The meeting will be held at 2.30 p.m. in the Library at 8 Adelphi Terrace. On the evening of Monday, July 6, Lord and Lady Howard de Walden are very kindly inviting members to a reception at Seaford House, when a dramatic entertainment of a varied and interesting kind will be presented.

The attention of members is specially directed to the Annual Report printed elsewhere in this number. The balance sheet, as usual, will be circulated at the Annual

Meeting, a course which is rendered necessary by the fact that the yearly accounts are made up to the end of May, this only allowing just time for their auditing and for the printing of the balance sheet by the date of the Annual Meeting.

The long-awaited catalogue of plays in the League's Library is at last ready under the title of "The Player's Guide." The cost of its issue has been considerable, and it is only by the sale of at least a thousand copies—at the special price to members of 2s.—that a loss on the publication can be obviated. So we appeal to everyone to do his or her duty in this respect. The catalogue, as its title implies, is really much more than a mere list of volumes. Besides carefully compiled details as to the scenery, costumes, number of characters required for every play, there follows a pithy synopsis of the plot which will prove a useful, an almost indispensable indication for Selection Committees and others concerned in the choice of plays for acting or reading.

Congratulations to the Founder of the Birmingham Repertory Theatre. Sir Barry Jackson has known what he wanted to do and has done it ever since he first associated himself with the stage. Of many wealthy patrons of art the same cannot be said. They wait to be told what they should do, and follow fashion rather than lead it. But here is one who is not so much patron as pioneer. A worker first and foremost, versatile, conscientious, yet full of enterprise. Thus early in his career he receives an honour which we prefer to regard as an encouragement for the future rather than as a reward for the past.

The entries for the Drama League Exhibition of Stage Designs in connexion with the University Extension Meetings at Oxford next August, have been very satisfactory. Full particulars of this Exhibition will be given in our next number.

THE LIBRARY TABLE

AT present, no catalogue of the reference and critical side of the Library is available, but the addition of Mr. William Archer's theatrical library has so greatly increased this section that we hope, in time, to publish a list, complementary to that of the plays, in the shape of a guide to our collection of books on dramatic technique, stagecraft and decoration, dramatic history and criticism.

New treasures are daily coming to light among the William Archer books; many of them are marked and annotated by Mr. Archer himself, and presentation copies from Oscar Wilde, W. E. Henley, Bernard Shaw and J. M. Synge are among the most interesting from the collector's standpoint. Absorbing, too, are the original replies from various actors and actresses to the questionnaire sent out by Mr. Archer in an endeavour to collect data as to how far it is usual for the artist to identify himself with the part he is playing; the conclusions gained from this correspondence are embodied in Mr. Archer's "Masks and Faces," an interesting companion volume to Diderot's "Paradoxe sur le Comédien." It is impossible, at present, to give a full appreciation of this collection and to do justice to its extent; let it suffice to say that it will provide anyone interested in the past and present history of the drama, with an excellent opportunity for study and research. It should, moreover, form the basis on which a most useful reference Library may be built up.

It has been decided that the Library shall subscribe to the "Monumenta Scenica" which is being published by the authorities of the Vienna National Library, assisted by the Austrian "Society for Editing the Monuments of Theatrical Art." This important work is to consist of twelve portfolios containing reproductions of drawings and designs in the Vienna National Library, with a descriptive text in German and English; it is intended that the whole shall present a comprehensive survey of the history of theatrical design from the 17th century onwards. Professor Max Reinhardt has said that "The treasures of the National Library

are the best pivot from which to grasp the problem of modern stagecraft in the light of the supreme achievements of the past." Only 200 sets of this work are available for sale in the British Empire and America and we may be glad to think that one has been acquired for our Library; the first two sections have already arrived and deal respectively with theatrical costume and theatrical architecture. The designs in the first portfolio are taken from L. O. Burzacchini's "Maschere," a 17th century work on the costumes of various nationalities considered from a theatrical and imaginative point of view. Plate No. XVI is, perhaps, of special interest, for it would certainly appear to represent characters from "Twelfth Night." The second portfolio, "Scenery and Architectural Phantasies," contains a most interesting selection of plates reproducing designs for theatrical architecture by important artists from the 16th to the 19th century.

Various donations have recently been received. Messrs. Wells, Gardner, Darton & Co., Ltd., have generously given a comprehensive selection from their publications including a number of plays for children, several of the admirable Bankside acting editions of Shakespeare, and Mr. Whanslaw's excellent and practical book on the toy theatre—"Everybody's Theatre."

Mr. Ewan Agnew has kindly presented us with a copy of his play, "The Shingling of Jupiter," while Mr. Huntly Carter's book, "The New Spirit in Drama and Art," is a most welcome addition and has been very kindly presented by Mr. Albert Rutherford.

We wish also to express our warm thanks to Dr. F. S. Boas for Vol. X of the English Association's publications, "Essays and Studies," to Mr. Trend for a number of Spanish plays, to Mr. C. E. Lawrence for Lemaitre's "Theatrical Impressions," to Mr. J. Fisher White for G. H. Lewes's "On Actors and Acting," and for other dramatic essays, as well as to the many others who have been good enough to add to the Library, but whose gifts we are unable to mention here in detail.

VIOLET CLAYTON.

NEWS FROM NORTH AND SOUTH

NOTTINGHAM PLAYGOERS' CLUB

Now that our season is drawing to a close, the time has come to give some record of our activities during the period.

Carrying on the policy of providing lecturers from London, we have during the 1924-25 session received addresses from Mr. Thomas Moulton, of "The Bookman" on "A Living Theatre"; from Miss Muriel Pratt, the well-known repertory actress-manager, who gave a brilliant outline of repertory work with its difficulties and triumphs; from Mr. Alfred Lugg, the secretary and founder of the Actors' Association, who discoursed on "Theatrical Conditions in England"; an old friend returned in the person of Professor Frank Adkins, who has just published his new play, "Education," and took his subject "Historical Drama" with a most illuminating account of the modern Russian and foreign drama; and from Mr. Cecil Roberts, novelist, journalist, and poet, who in some brilliant passages discussed "The Creation of Stage Character."

It is a matter of deep regret that the untimely death of Mr. William Archer prevented us hearing the lecture which he was hoping to deliver to us this session.

Amidst other activities one may mention the series of three dances which were held and were excellent social successes. In particular our fancy-dress ball produced many charming costumes and some originality of thought. The cause of the drama was fostered by giving as prizes, copies of the latest plays published.

Progress has been somewhat hampered owing to an unavoidable change of locale, but the committee hopes next season to move into brighter and more convenient quarters.

Plans are in hand for an entirely fresh programme next season on somewhat different lines from those of this year.

As regards practical politics. This club was instrumental in obtaining a reduction in the price of booked seats at the Theatre Royal, and, acting also upon the club's suggestion, the same management arranged to make all the ground-floor seats reservable—a vast improvement.

The club presented a petition to the City Corporation for the provision of a room in the new Town Hall which would be suitable for theatrical performances. In this petition the club enlisted the support of some fifteen local dramatic societies, representing some thousand persons. Unfortunately, the City Fathers turned a deaf ear to our pleadings, and placed commerce before art, in spite of the fact that we asked merely that the hall to be built should be designed in such a way that it could be used for theatricals. If we had asked for a special little theatre to be built, the refusal would have been understood.

However, we are still looking for a suitable room ourselves.

N. P. T.

THE NEW PLAY CLUB

Miss Sybil Thorndike is the president of this recently-formed club, and its members are justify-

ing their choice of title by producing a number of new plays at their first performance on Tuesday, June 9. Their programme for this evening, which was presented in the theatre of the Guildhall School of Music, consisted of five plays, three of which—"Mary Comes Home," by S. Macer-Wright; "An Old Jest," by T. Bolt; and "Pity," by Cecil Clifton—are being performed for the first time, and a fourth—"East of Eden," by Christopher Morley—made their first appearance on this side of the Atlantic.

The club has been formed by a combination of players who have already given many performances under the direction of their producer, Mme. Lillian Ginnett. They have recently received many appreciative notices for their presentations of Lady Gregory's "The Travelling Man," Mr. Geoffrey Whitworth's "Father Noah," and Mr. W. B. Yeats's "The Hour Glass" at the drama services in St. Paul's Church, Covent Garden; and they have embarked upon their new enterprise with the object of producing as many new plays as possible.

Several well-known writers, including Mrs. Edith Nepean, Owen Oliver, and Caradoc Evans, are associated with the club, and its Hon. Secretary is Mr. Frederic Tomlin, of 102 Bedford Hill, S.W.12.

CHESTERFIELD

The Chesterfield Dramatic Society have ventured into the realms of a wider publicity, and recently, at the Corporation Theatre, gave the general public an opportunity of enjoying their undoubted ability to amuse and entertain. In previous years their annual performances have been in the Marsden Street Congregational Schoolroom, where, with a small stage and a rather limited accommodation for the audience, they have none the less given a series of well-interpreted plays.

In the choice of that most amusing farce "Are You a Mason?" the Society was well advised. It is broad farce all through and fairly plain sailing. It was introduced to England many years ago, and has had a number of revivals since. In fact, we doubt if it has ever quite expired, for, like "Charley's Aunt," it is always a stand-by when the box-office receipts need to be replenished.

The recent performance was conspicuous for the really splendid acting of each member of the cast, and for the bright and breezy atmosphere which prevailed all through each act, and which so admirably suits the piece.

MALVERN SCHOOL-GIRLS' BALLET

A forest glade in the heat of the day, and a king in mediæval garb comes upon a little dwarf or creature of the woodland, who tries to make him see the beauty of life in this wonderful forest. But the king has no eye for such things, and anon the little dwarf abandons his vain efforts and frolics with the gnomes and the creatures of the world of faery, while the king is rejoined by his huntsmen, who decide to take the little dwarf away to the Court. . . . Such was the first scene of an original ballet, based on Noyes's "Tragedy of the Dwarf," and given by the girls of Launsdale School.

NEWS FROM NORTH AND SOUTH

Mr. Noyes's poem is so beautiful in conception and poetic charm that it was good to see it brought before at least a small section of the public; good, too, to have it told thus in the oldest of all languages—gesture, which is also the oldest of all the arts.

The children, who expressed the spirit of the whimsical story in their graceful movements, were all subtly steeped in the radiant joy of youth, which alone is capable of truly entering into the pathos of romance; so were these young things doubly able to impress their audience with the beauty of this too-little-known poem of to-day.

Apart from the recitation of "The Tragedy of the Dwarf" before the Prelude to the Ballet (a panoramic "dance-past" of multi-coloured gnomes, gypsies, and mediæval courtiers), no word was spoken, save in a brief explanation of each scene, but the classical music, well-chosen and cleverly linked together, was entirely happy in its relationship to the dancing, and did much to sustain the atmosphere of a well-conceived performance.

That such a ballet should be composed, its dances learnt, and the dresses designed and made within the walls of a comparatively small girls' school speaks well for those responsible for its production. It was an excellent example, moreover, of the modern girl's capabilities in this ancient art.

Judging by the audience the Malvern Hospital, in aid of which this unique performance was given, must have benefited considerably.

CITIZEN HOUSE, BATH

The Citizen House Players, of Bath, have recently been performing the mystery play of Mrs. G. K. Chesterton, "Piers Plowman's Pilgrimage," founded on the great fourteenth-century epic. The play met with a very brilliant success when performed at the Pump Room, Bath, and was transferred to the Player's own Little Theatre, where it is still running. An interesting innovation in stage-setting was the use of a top gallery for the "Vision of the Virtues." An ethereal atmosphere and effect similar to that of a stained-glass window was thus obtained.

The richness of colouring and simplicity of design on the costumes and stage-settings further emphasized this. Mr. and Mrs. G. K. Chesterton were guests at Citizen House during the production.

SHAKESPEARE AT LLANGOLLEN

The Llangollen (English) Literary Society have recently given two performances of "As You Like It" at the Town Hall. It was the fourth Shakespearean production given by this ambitious little band of players. "Macbeth," "A Midsummer's Night Dream," and "Twelfth Night" already having been performed. "As You Like It" surpassed all previous productions. The technique of the whole company has vastly improved in the last twelve months; they have completely lost the stilted and wooden movements so often portrayed by amateurs. Their diction was good, the lines getting across with ease and naturalness. Most

credit is due to the producer, Dr. A. W. Titherley, who has trained his company almost to perfection and who thoroughly understands the art of producing. Dr. Titherley is a great Shakespearean enthusiast, and has a deep insight into our most famous dramatist's works. MARGARET HARRISON.

THE COMMUNITY PLAYERS, BIRMINGHAM

This Society has continued its policy of giving performances in various centres to the inhabitants of the poorer parts of the city, and the year's work has been extremely encouraging. The number of performances shows a great increase on that of the first year; the plays produced, while greater in number, have been more ambitious; the standard of performance has been considerably improved; and the audiences have grown both in numbers and enthusiasm.

This increase in the volume of work has demanded many sacrifices from the members, and it became evident that some means must be found to meet the growing demand for performances. Eventually this was achieved by the incorporation of a new company, playing previously as "The Howell Davies' Dramatic Players." It was decided that for internal organization the two companies should be determined the "X" and the "Y" Company respectively. Many performances were given outside Birmingham. The Society had the privilege of performing a Miracle Play and a Morality in the church at Lapworth and on the lawn of the rectory at Bickenhill-in-Arden. In January of this year the Society accepted an invitation from the Infant Welfare Department, Wolverhampton, to perform to some 2,000 poor mothers at their annual gathering at the Theatre Royal, Wolverhampton. A new feature has been introduced this year by the preparation of a programme for free distribution at each performance. The programmes are designed to help the people to really understand the plays, and to provide them with a useful souvenir of the performance, and your Council feels that the labour of preparing them and the cost of printing them has been justified by the results.

MAIDSTONE.

For their fourth appearance on the public stage the members of the Malgo A.D.C. Society recently produced Bernard Shaw's "Pygmalion," at the Corn Exchange, Maidstone. There was a full and appreciative audience at each performance. Founded three years ago, with the object of producing plays of more permanent value and interest than those usually given in the commercial theatre, especially in a town like Maidstone where examples of the best modern drama are seldom seen, the Society of necessity betrays ambition. In its brief career it has won much encouragement and deserves yet still more. A year ago it made good with a delightful study in Barrie's "The Admirable Crichton." From Barrie to Shaw's "Pygmalion," problem play, comedy, extravaganzas, romance, or what you will, is a pleasing contrast in the presentation of character studies. But for their task the players had gathered much experience.

ANNUAL REPORT

To be submitted to the Annual Meeting of the British Drama League, on Friday, July 3, at 2.30 p.m., at 8 Adelphi Terrace, London, W.C.

IN submitting the sixth Annual Report of the British Drama League, the Council are happily able to record a continuance of the progress which was apparent during the year ending June 30, 1924. At that date the League's membership stood at 868. It has now risen to 1,116. There have been 137 resignations. This leaves a net increase of 248. The total number of affiliated societies now on the register amounts to 501.

The Library.

It will be remembered that in the last report mention was made of the grant of £200 which had been made by the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust for the purpose of buying books. Such wide use was made of the books purchased under this grant that the League felt itself justified in approaching the Trust with the suggestion that they should help us to enlarge the Library and circulate the books more adequately. In October last the Trustees stated that they were ready to make an annual grant of £750 for the running and housing of the Library, this grant to be renewed for three years, at the end of which time they hoped that the League itself would be able to support the Library from its own funds. The Trustees also promised a sum of £500 for the expense of the move from 10 King Street to new premises, which would be needed if only for the purpose of housing the new books to be purchased under the scheme. Needless to say, the Council gratefully accepted this subsidy, and new premises were found at 8 Adelphi Terrace, whither the offices of the League and its Library were transferred on February 25. Mr. Albert Rutherford kindly offered to supervise the decoration of the new premises, and the best thanks of the Council are due to him for the care and taste which he brought to bear on the problem. Both the offices of the League and the Library are now well and conveniently housed.

In view of the prospect of a wide extension of the Library work it was decided to engage an experienced librarian, and Miss Doherty's place has therefore been taken by Miss Violet Clayton, who has already introduced the most approved system of library organization. The League's thanks are due to Miss Doherty for the good work she did for us.

Recent gifts to the Library (which now numbers some 6,000 volumes) have included a complete series of *The Mask* from its commencement in 1914, presented by Mr. E. J. Dent, and a complete series of dramatic publications issued by Messrs. Wells, Gardner, Darton and Co.

The Library was formally inaugurated at a luncheon at the Hotel Cecil on March 24, when speeches were delivered by the Minister for Education, Lord Eustace Percy, Miss E. S. Haldane and Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson. Viscount Burnham presided.

A special committee has been appointed to conduct the business of the Library, consisting of Dr. F. S. Boas (Chairman), Mr. C. O. G. Douie, Professor Allardyce Nicoll, Mr. Albert Rutherford, Mr. Ashley Dukes, Mr. Alec L. Rea, and Mr. Geoffrey Whitworth.

Archer Bequest.

This is the place to mention the very valuable addition to the Library secured by the decision of the executors of the late Mr. William Archer to give into the charge of the Drama League his extensive collection of theatrical books. These books, numbering over 1,500 volumes, are now on the shelves of the Library, and are available for members pending the establishment of a National Theatre, when by the terms of Mr. Archer's will the books will be handed over to the Library of that Institution. Lord Howard de Walden, Mr. H. Granville-Barker, and Mr. Laurence Binyon have consented to act as trustees for this bequest.

Liverpool Conference.

The Autumn Conference of Affiliated Societies was held at Liverpool under the auspices of the Liverpool Playhouse Circle, on October 24 and 25, and was attended by 120 delegates from all parts of the country. The Conference proceedings opened with a reception at the Town Hall by the Lord Mayor of Liverpool to Drama League delegates. This was followed by a public meeting in the evening, at which Miss Lena Ashwell, Mr. Granville-Barker, and Mr. Lennox Robinson spoke, the chair being taken by Professor Reilly. On the following morning the private conference of delegates was held, under the chairmanship of Mr. Alec Rea, and in the afternoon the delegates were entertained at a Gala Performance at the Playhouse of "Crabbed Youth and Age" and "Mary's John." This was followed by a performance of a triple bill by Liverpool amateurs in the evening.

At the Conference the two most important items discussed were the question of authors' fees for play-reading (see December DRAMA) and the subscription of affiliated societies. A resolution, proposed by the Penrith Players, was passed to the effect that the Council should be recommended to charge a minimum subscription of one guinea for every affiliated society; societies with a membership of more than 100 to pay 16s. 6d. for every successive hundred or part of a hundred, with a maximum payment of £5 5s. The question is in practice a difficult one. The Council have discussed many of its aspects and have appointed a small Committee to report upon the whole problem of the League's finances and their relation to the subscription.

ANNUAL REPORT

An invitation has been received from The Play and Pageants Union, Birmingham, to hold the next autumn conference in that city.

Plays and Publications.

The third series of Drama League plays was published in May this year. It included:

- "John Kemp's Wager," by Robert Graves.
- "The Web," by T. Stirling Boyd.
- "Eldorado," by Howard Peacey.
- "Three One-Act Plays," by A. K. Clarke, A. O. Roberts, and L. du Garde Peach.

Critical reports on seventy-five plays have been sent to members during the past twelve months.

The Magazine.

The Council have for some time been searching for means and opportunity to improve the magazine; and since April last DRAMA has appeared as a sixteen-page instead of an eight-page magazine. It is hoped to improve it still further as its circulation warrants.

Drama and Education.

On Thursday, January 8, the League held a meeting at the Conference of Educational Associations at University College, Gower Street, the subject being "Craft and Design in Dramatic Production." Mr. Lewis Casson took the chair, and the other speakers were Mr. Albert Rutherton, Miss Radford, of Citizen House, Bath, and Mr. Herbert Norris.

The annual Drama League Play Competition among London clubs has again been organized, the final competition being held at the Mary Ward Settlement on July 1. This year the number of entries was treble those of last year; forty-two clubs competed.

The Drama League was invited by the Board of Education Committee on Adult Education to provide the first witnesses at the enquiry into the place of Drama in Adult Education, and on Thursday, July 10, Mr. Granville-Barker and Mr. Geoffrey Whitworth attended for this purpose. The Committee's report is expected this year, and is the most important attempt yet made in this country to provide a survey of dramatic work in its relation to adult education.

Lectures.

At the instance of the Board of Education, the British Drama League was asked by the British Broadcasting Company to organize a series of Lecture-Recitals illustrating the development of the stage from the earliest times to the present day. A course of seven lectures was arranged as follows:

- "Greek Drama," Miss Fogerty and Mr. Lewis Casson.
- "The Mediaeval Stage," Mr. Ben Greet and the Ben Greet Players.
- "The Elizabethan Stage," Mr. Bridges Adams and the New Shakespeare Co.
- "Restoration Stage," Miss Elsie Fogerty and Professor Allardyce Nicoll.
- "XVIIIth Century Stage," Mr. Nigel Playfair and Company.
- "The Modern Theatre," Mr. John Drinkwater and Students of the R.A.D.A.
- "The New Amateur Movement," Mr. Geoffrey Whitworth and the Board of Education Co-operative Theatre, the Henfield Tipteers, and the Mansfield House Players.

A course of lectures was given in the autumn at the Century Theatre in conjunction with the Lena Ashwell Players as follows:

- "Macbeth," by Miss Lena Ashwell.
- "The Theatre Unbound," by Mr. Ashley Dukes.
- "Elizabethan Worship," by Mr. William Archer.
- "Hamlet and Ophelia," by Miss Clemence Dane.
- "Drama and Democracy," by Mr. W. J. Turner.
- "The Japanese Stage," by Mrs. John Penlington.

On October 20 a lecture was given by M. Jacques Copeau, of the Théâtre du Vieux Colombier, at the Institut Français, the chair being taken by Mr. H. Granville-Barker.

Other addresses have been given and help in production afforded by Mr. W. G. Fay, Miss Gwen Lally, Mr. Harold Ridge, Mrs. Penelope Wheeler, Mr. Gerard Middleditch, Mr. Geoffrey Whitworth, Mr. Holford Knight, Miss C. de Reyes, Madame Ginnert, Mr. Stanley Groome.

British Empire Exhibition.

The League was again invited to organize a Theatrical Section for this year's revival. The historical models are again being shown, and a special exhibit of modern theatre designs occupies the adjoining galleries. Works by Mr. Gordon Craig, Mr. Charles Ricketts, Mr. Albert Rutherton, Mr. Paul Shelving, and several other artists are to be seen there.

Architectural Competition for Designs for a National Theatre.

This Competition, full particulars of which were given in our last report, was won by Mr. W. L. Somerville, of Toronto, whom the League was happy to welcome in person at the presentation on June 30 last at the British Empire Exhibition, when the cheque of £250, given by Mr. James K. Hackett, was presented to him by Mr. J. Alfred Gotch, President of the Royal Institute of British Architects, on behalf of the League. On the same occasion a debate was conducted by delegates from the Oxford and Cambridge Unions on the National Theatre question. The following resolution was carried:

"That in the interests of Art and Education this Meeting would welcome the establishment of a National Theatre in London."

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Fee, £1 11s. 6d. the course.
- (c) PLAY PRODUCTION, 5-7 p.m. daily.
Fee, £2 2s. 0d. the course.
- (d) SCHOOL DRAMATIC WORK, 10-11 a.m.
daily. Fee, £1 1s. 0d. the course.
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TER DANCING. Fee, £1 11s. 6d. the course.
- (f) EURYTHMICS. Fee, £1 11s. 6d. the course.
- (g) BALLET. Fee, £1 11s. 6d. the course.
- (h) GREEK DANCING. Fee, £2 2s. the course.

(Hours to be arranged to fit in with dramatic work.)

*A reduction will be made for Students taking more
than one course.*

NOTE: These courses have been postponed from their usual
date in early August for the convenience of Students who may
be attending the University Extension Lectures at Oxford.
The Director herself will be in Oxford from July 30th to
August 20th, when she will be pleased to discuss details of
these courses with intending students.

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Reprinted from DAILY GRAPHIC, May 16, 1925.

The Eton-and-Oxford Barber.

In the Bachelors' Club yesterday I met young Francis Napier Beaufort-Palmer, the son of Sir Francis Beaufort-Palmer, who was, I suppose, the best known company-law authority of the age. He told me that he has opened a hairdresser's in Duke Street, St. James's, next door to Dunhill's.

"Everybody seems to be starting some sort of business," he said. "I did nothing much at Eton except read Jane Austen and at New College I was just President of the Italian and Spanish Club, so when I came down from Oxford I began to look round for the sort of thing that no one else was doing.

"I had the luck to get hold of the men who used to work for Charles Jaschke, so I started this hairdressing business.

"But he has ideas outside hair cutting. At Oxford he made friends with Masfield and Bridges and became an assistant secretary to the British Drama League on coming down. He has himself written plays "

